

At an event with ESPN reporter Erin Andrews, Congressional Members call for updating, modernizing law

WASHINGTON, D.C. —Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (D-CA) and U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) joined ESPN reporter Erin Andrews today to call for strengthening and updating federal anti-stalking laws to address the new technology predators are using to harass their victims. Congresswoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Congressman Scott Murphy (D-NY), and Congressman Leonard Boswell (D-IA) also voiced their support for the initiative at the event.

“The laws need to be as sophisticated as the predators who violate them,” Klobuchar said. **“As a former prosecutor, I understand how critical it is that law enforcement be given the tools to combat the growing threat of cyberstalking.”**

“Cyberstalking is a serious crime that deserves serious consequences,” said Sanchez. **“We need to increase the scope of existing laws to cover electronic surveillance and other new technologies as they develop. It’s time to bring our federal stalking laws into the 21st century.”**

Klobuchar will be introducing a Senate companion bill to HR 5662, the Simplifying the Ambiguous Law, Keeping Everyone Reliably Safe (STALKERS) Act that Congresswoman Sanchez introduced last week. The bill would strengthen federal anti-stalking laws to protect victims and provide prosecutors with the necessary tools to combat the growing threat of cyber-stalking.

Current federal anti-stalking laws are outdated and may not cover all acts of electronic surveillance, including spyware, bugging, video surveillance, and other new technology used by modern-day stalkers.

The legislation empowers law enforcement to prosecute any act of stalking that would be “reasonably expected” to cause a person serious emotional distress. It requires the attorney

general to evaluate federal, state, and local efforts to enforce anti-stalking laws and submit an annual report on best practices.

Additionally, the bill increases the punishment for stalking offenses to protect the most vulnerable victims of stalking. Offenders who are convicted for violating protection orders, stalking minors, or stalking the elderly may be sentenced to a maximum additional five years in prison.

Cyberstalking is a problem that has grown more severe as digital technology has improved and proliferated. The National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC) estimates that one out of every four stalking victims report being stalked through some form of technology, such as e-mail or instant messaging. NCVC supports the STALKERS Act.